

HOW YOUR CLUB MAY HELP
THE BLIND TO READ
Robert B. Irwin

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HOW YOUR CLUB MAY HELP THE BLIND TO READ

The story behind the Talking Book—The new boon for the blind, which reads itself aloud—The government has a vital need for every community to fulfil if its own blind people are to benefit by the free circulation of these books.

By Robert B. Irwin

Executive Director, American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

■ Who has not passed a blind person pluckily making his or her way through city traffic without wishing that something might be done to transform his life? This hopeless feeling of inadequacy to aid the blind has now, through the use of Federal funds on one hand and philanthropically subsidized research on the other, been given a new and practical outlet. Through the new Talking Books and every community's responsibility to put reading machines in the hands of the needy among their local blind to read these Talking Books, there is now no need for sympathy for the blind to be left unexpressed. Wasted sympathy has become as antiquated and unnecessarily futile as the "Lady Bounti-

fuls" of a generation ago, who left baskets for old rheumatic Mrs. "M" instead of repairing the leak in the roof which caused her rheumatism.

This Talking Book, just as its name implies, reads itself aloud to the blind, page by page and chapter by chapter. "It is the nearest thing to the regaining of sight itself," is a typical comment of a blind reader after using it. Another blind person who terms the Talking Book "the marvel of the

ages" is in reality not outside the realm of truth. The Talking Book is the first aid to the blind, comparable to braille, the raised type for the blind, since the introduction of braille over one hundred years ago.

While the Talking Book is termed "magical" by another blind user in attempting to describe what the newly regained ability to read means to him, the origin of the Talking Book lies in the old phonograph principle. This has been developed to serve the blind with upwards of more than half an hour of continuous reading from a single disc or record. This new type disc is extremely light, and flexible, despite its greatly increased durability. A novel of ordinary length may be recorded on twelve to fifteen 12-inch discs.

Few of the public may have realized what a momentous step in service to the 114,000 blind men, women and children in the United States was taken when the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., several months ago, announced the release of the first group of Talking Books for free library circulation to blind people. This announcement meant that any blind person in the United States can borrow Talking Books free by applying in person or by mail to the nearest of the 26 public libraries having departments for the blind. Through a recent Act of Congress, postage is free to and from libraries and readers.

(Turn to page 30)



Blind girl "reading" a Talking Book



Above: Mrs. Ida Hirst-Gifford and a blind girl using the Talking Book; below: Mrs. Albert King, Mrs. Richard R. Montgomery and Mrs. Eckley B. Cox, Jr., Philadelphia Junior League members, at Sweetbriar Mansion in Fairmount Park during a demonstration of a recently perfected "Book".



Mrs. Poole On Air February the 22nd

■ Through the courtesy of the National Broadcasting Company the International Federation of Business and Professional Women is presenting an international peace forum this winter, the speakers being representatives from leading national and international organizations. On February 22 the speaker will be Mrs. Poole. The hour of the broadcast is 4 to 4:30 P. M., Eastern Standard time. Mrs. Poole will present the international relations program of the General Federation.

Mrs. James C. Carmark, of Providence, President and General Federation Director of the Rhode Island Federation.



Mrs. Sherman Passes Away in Denver

■ The thousands of club women throughout the country who knew and loved Mrs. John D. Sherman, former president of the General Federation, will be grieved to learn of her death January 15 at the home of her son, John King Sherman in Colorado. It will be remembered that Mrs. Sherman suffered concussion of the brain when she was hit by a bus October 19 in Washington D. C. On January 9 she was taken west by her nurse, she seemed to suffer no ill effects from the trip and the reunion with her son was a happy one, but within a few days she took a turn for the worse. A tribute to her and her long service to club women, will appear in the March issue.

Mrs. Wiley Presents Food and Drug Bill

■ A presentation of the Pure Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics Bill (S. 5) introduced in this session of Congress by Senator Royal S. Copeland of New York, was made to the Board by Mrs. Harvey W. Wiley, president of the District Federation. Mrs. Wiley emphasized the point that neither this Bill nor the previous ones introduced by Senator Copeland were intended as amendments to the existing law.

“For sentimental reasons the Federal food officials desired to amend the old law originally drafted by Dr. Wiley,” said Mrs. Wiley, “but after careful study it was found impossible to tack on amendments of the number and character required to give a reasonable degree of public protection without the creation of a legislative monstrosity. I regret as much as anyone this necessity. But would the inventor of the first airship selfishly want to see his original model used if a later model made life more secure? I think the answer is ‘No.’”

After tracing the course of the successive Pure Food and Drugs Bills introduced in the last Session by Senator Copeland, Mrs. Wiley said, “S. 5 is an evolution and has the advantage of growth and improvement to meet objections. The name of the new law is to be Federal Food, Drugs and Cosmetics Act, instead of simply Federal Food and Drugs Act. The provisions are rearranged so that the bill is clearer, and has three sets of provisions of adulteration and misbranding. It contains an Introductory Chapter, a Chapter on Foods, one on Drugs, one on Cosmetics, and one on Administration.”

Mrs. Wiley explained numerous changes and improvements in the new Bill. This piece of proposed legislation, she declared, has a good chance to pass as the opposition from many sources is dying out.

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tonic for the recently discovered social apathy.

Adult education is therefore a peculiarly thorough process for revealing the interests and needs of a community and of individuals, for developing aptitudes, for programs of guidance, for discovering and remedying civic and social apathy. It has been well said that the greatest danger to Democracy is that civic apathy which similarly affects the improved mind and the unimproved, both unconcerned with what is going on. Education in itself does not mean progress unless there is fact-findings research. This is the essence of true adult education, that it be fact-finding, non-traditional with truth at any cost, not only teaching creative thought, but passing on to the children the knowledge of how to think for themselves. This was characteristic of those who formed our Democracy and has been an art only occasionally revived when need and excess apathy required. Adult Education offers some evidence both of that revival and of a more alert and intelligent citizenry.

The "Talking Book"

(Continued from page 15)

The first group of Talking Books which includes modern and recent fiction, three plays from Shakespeare and excerpts from the Bible, will be followed by other groups of Talking Books and the first sound library ever established thus will be representative and general in character. Thus publication and free circulation of Talking Books is made possible by the Federal appropriation for books for the blind.

At this point, a reader of The CLUBWOMAN may well exclaim: "Marvelous, but why are the blind after all of this dependent upon our clubs or anyone else in the community to read these books?" The answer is at once apparent when one realizes that a Talking Book, even in the hands of the blind, is silent and useless without a reading machine. Since the Federal appropriation for books for the blind is restricted to books and books only, its use for Talking Books is limited to their publication and circulation. The Library of Congress, which is authorized to handle the appropriation and select new titles from time to time, is depending upon the friends of the blind to make these machines available to the blind of their communities. This reading machine was perfected at the same time and in the same charitably subsidized research studio as the Talking Book itself. Thus, both the Talking Book and its reading machine are safeguarded from commercialism and protected for the exclusive use of the blind now and in the future at the actual cost of manufacture.

If blind people are to benefit by this Federal service, it is vital that women's clubs and other civic clubs realize that their cooperation is necessary at this time. Otherwise, hours that are now desolate and empty cannot be transformed by study and other profitable use of

Spiritual Citizenship

(Continued from page 13)

paramount importance. No good thing comes about anonymously. There must be those who care, who love their town and the nation and will keep on loving it! Main Street needs those who love it, and at the same time hate its stupidity, but above all, who will keep on being loyal to it in spite of the Bill Thompsons, the Huey Longs and the sad catalog of buccaneers who often stampede our politics and raid our tills.

Religion, when seen as it is, stripped of the mockery of it which has often posed as goodness, is something which is buoyant, beautiful, friendly, which compells one to be a good Samaritan, to love one's neighbor as oneself. Such a reinforcement to character is not only an aid to citizenship, but at least for a large part of the population of any state, is a primary requisite to keep our feet on the sharp and often stony path of plain duty.



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JUNIORS, MRS. EDWARD M. LAND, chairman: Every state is now under the Junior banner. The last to come in was the District of Columbia, which made its entry shortly after the Council meeting in Hot Springs last May.

The Committee appointed by the Executive Board to analyze the plans of organization now in operation affecting Junior work, will hold a conference on Monday, January 21. The purpose of this conference is to make recommendations as to the standardization of Junior activity. These recommendations will be incorporated in the Convention Call in order that states may have ample opportunity to consider proposed changes. Members of this committee are Mrs. Edward M. Land, chairman; Mrs. W. E. Shirk, vice-chairman of Juniors; Mrs. Edwin Bevens, immediate past chairman; Miss Florence Dibert, first chairman of Juniors; and two Juniors, Mrs. J. G. Morgan, Illinois, and Miss Alice MacLaughlin, Pennsylvania. Mrs. J. P. Turner of Kansas is a sitting-in member of this committee.

(Continued next month)

Constructive Citizenship

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the United States Constitution in the schools. So it is the duty of all federated clubs to see that this law is being carried out in their respective communities.

The women of today are the instructors of the citizens of tomorrow and women's clubs perform their service as "Training Camps for Citizenship," not only by creating a more intelligent citizenry among their members, but by giving mothers the training that enables them to lay the foundation for good citizenship in their children.

We have never before been confronted with such alarming social and political conditions as exist in the world today. The rebellion against authority, the open violations of all regulations and laws that interfere with certain selfish interests and desires, the bold flaunting of dangerous and un-American doctrines are some of the symptoms of the state of dis-

order and lawlessness with which our country is battling. "What is the club woman's duty with regard to this condition and what is she going to do about it?"

As loyal citizens, pledged to work for the best interests of our country, we must make all her problems, our problems, and unite our efforts with those of all true citizens for their solution. In the present emergency, the call comes to each of us with startling force—a call that tests our loyalty and forces into action a constructive citizenship that will demonstrate our love of country and our belief in American institutions. Just as in the days of the World War American womanhood sprang into action to aid in saving civilization, so today, though in a different way but with the same spirit, that army will again arise to save Christian civilization to the world.

Adult Discovers Education

(Continued from page 12)

by the community, obtaining cooperation and integration of all activities and organizations, and offering necessary social, vocational, avocational, recreational and hobby subjects.

Closely related to some programs of adult education, and of increasing interest, are panel discussions, on subjects of immediate popular concern, in a Community Forum. These discussions are under the skilled and trained leadership of those who know the necessary techniques. Conducted on the platform with the participation of half a dozen selected leaders of the community (seated in a semi-circle before the audience), the subjects such as "unemployment insurance in Europe"—"Is World Peace Possible?" are later thrown open to questions from the floor. Through such means not only do adult evening school pupils become intensely interested and educated, but the public at large participate in great numbers. We recommended the discussion forum as an antidote for jaded civic interest, provided it is under trained leadership. This is a discovered

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NEXT ISSUE: LEGISLATION

FEBRUARY, 1935

Talking Books by the blind. One other reason why blind people everywhere are so eagerly acclaiming the Talking Book is that less than one-fourth of the blind in the United States can read braille. In addition, there are countless others who cannot read with sufficient rapidity and ease to make reading a stimulation and relaxation. Sixty-five per cent of the blindness in this country, statistics tell us, comes too late in life for the individual to master the raised type; his fingers have already lost their sensitivity.

Already, many clubs affiliated with the General Federation of Women's Clubs are actively at work. These clubs set up their own local Talking Book Committees with the two-fold objective: first, to raise funds for the purchase of Talking Book machines and second, to distribute them to the needy among the blind in their own cities or towns. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey women's clubs and junior women's clubs have taken over a large quota of reading machines to put into circulation in their own state. In other cities, clubs are joining with other civic groups in a community-wide Talking Book campaign. The Junior Leagues of Detroit, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are also active. Every such club in the country might ask itself, "Is there a blind man or woman in our community who would benefit by the use of these Talking Books but who is deprived of the opportunity through inability to buy the machine?"

Information on organizing Talking Book committees and getting into touch with already existing committees may be had from the American Foundation for the Blind, 125 East 46th Street, New York. The reading machines which are sold at cost come in three models: an electric set for alternating current; a set for both alternating and direct current and a spring-driven set with headphones. The electric Talking Book machine is a combination phonograph and 5-tube radio set measuring about 21 x 15 x 9 inches and entirely contained in a single unit, so that when closed it can be carried as is a suitcase. (The electric sets range from \$42 to \$45.)



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